

E James

This is a name listed on the Roll of Honour at St Mary's Church, Amersham, but not on the War Memorial and it is therefore possible that **E James** survived the war. With only an initial combined with a widespread surname and with no information from the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, this was not going to be an easy search.

The 1901 and 1911 Censuses for the local area produced 3 male E Jameses:

Edward James, born in 1903, son of John James, road labourer, and Mary, of Amersham Common. He would only have been 15 when the war ended and so should have been too young to serve.

Edward James, born *circa* 1879 in Camden Town, who was boarding in 1911 with Mr & Mrs Major of Hivings Hill, Chesham. He is linked to Chesham rather than to Amersham.

Ernest James, born about 1899, son of William James, farm labourer, and Sarah, of Beaconsfield. It is possible that he could have moved to Amersham, but we have no proof that he did.

Ernest W JANES, born about 1879 in Great Missenden. His family name is consistently spelt in successive Censuses with an 'n', so he should be eliminated.

Street Directories offered no leads and the Medal Index Cards for "E James" were too numerous to produce any helpful results. However three served with the Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry, who kindly checked their records for James 265740 Ernest, James 235078 Ernest E and James 20173 Ernest W. One of these hailed from Berkshire and two from Oxfordshire. The Amersham branch of the British Legion also kindly checked their records, with no result.

Next the 1918 *Absent Voters' List* for the parish of Amersham was consulted. This produced one lead. Entry no 260 was for James, William Ernest, of Plantation Road, described as 68273 Private, 7th Devons. The Regimental Roll of Honour, however, includes an entry for 68273 James, William Ernest, who was entitled to receive the British and Victory Medals, but lists him as part of the 1st Battalion. He was transferred to the 'Z' Reserves on 9 September 1919 and therefore had survived the war. When handwritten the numerals 7 and 1 are easily confused, but the regimental records are likely to be the more accurate.

William Ernest James was born in the Amersham Registration District in the third quarter of 1899 and appears in the Censuses of 1901 and 1911 as the third of four sons in a family of 7 surviving children. The parents are John James, a labourer working on the roads, and his wife Mary née Cox. The couple remained within the area of Amersham Common and can be found in 1891 on White Lion Road, near the Red Lion in 1901 and at Tappings Row close to the Pheasant in 1911.

He would not have been old enough for military service until quite late in the war, by which time some battalions of regular troops, such as the 1st Battalion of the Devonshire Regiment, were having to accept replacement drafts from the New Armies. The battalion saw service in Italy from November 1917 and was moved back to France on 7 April 1918.

In the two Censuses in which he appears William Ernest is listed simply as William James. It is possible that later he decided for some reason to use his second name, but it does slightly weaken the case for William Ernest James of the Devons being the E James on the Roll of Honour, so we cannot regard this as fully proven.